

## REMARKS

Applicant requests favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

The claims now pending in the application are claims 1-4, 8-12, 16 and 17, with claims 1 and 9 being independent. Claims 5-7 and 13-15 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. By this Amendment, claims 1-4 and 9-12 have been amended. In addition, the specification has been amended to correct inadvertent errors, as requested by the Office Action. Support for the amendments to the claims and to the specification can be found in the original application, as filed. No new matter has been added.

Applicant initially notes that claims 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 13-15 are objected to and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Inasmuch as independent claims 1 and 9 are believed to be allowable, none of these claims has been rewritten into independent form.

In the outstanding Office Action, claim 5 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112 as being indefinite. Applicant submits that this rejection is now moot inasmuch as claim 5 has been canceled herein. Withdrawal of this rejection is requested.

Regarding the art rejections, claims 1, 8, and 9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,832,122 to Shimazaki. Claims 4, 12, 16, and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Shimazaki. Applicant traverses these rejections.

As amended herein, independent claims 1 and 9 are directed to an image processing apparatus and an image processing method, respectively, for supplying an image forming apparatus having a plurality of print elements with image data that has undergone a halftoning process by using a threshold mask which is corrected based on an output characteristic of the image forming apparatus. According to each of these claims,

the output characteristic is analyzed based on line-by-line density output by each of the plurality of print elements of the image forming apparatus.

Applicant submits that Shimazaki fails to teach or suggest at least these features. Shimazaki relates to a method of processing image data and is directed to reducing problems in generation of halftone screens by using a dither matrix, a dot gain, and an undesirable regular pattern. This document is understood to teach that densities of test patterns formed on a graphic film F or a printed document P are measured using a densitometer 26. Corrected quantities Cor are then determined based on density differences with respect to ON and OFF states of pixels Q1 - Q4 surrounding a central pixel Q when the central pixel changes between and OFF state and an ON state. See col. 8, l. 61 - Col. 9, l. 12. However, nowhere does Shimazaki teach or suggest at least that an output characteristic is analyzed *based on line-by-line density output by each of a plurality of print elements* of an image forming apparatus, as recited in claims 1 and 9.

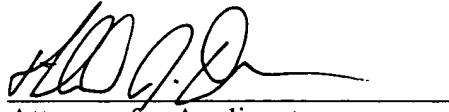
Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1 and 9 are requested.

The remaining claims depend from either claim 1 or claim 9, and are believed allowable by virtue of this dependency, as well as for defining other patentable features of the invention. Favorable and individual consideration of the dependent claims is requested.

In light of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections. Additionally, Applicant submits that this application is in condition for allowance. An early Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M.J. Didas", is written over a horizontal line.

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